

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**Community Policing Improves Police  
Performance and Public Image**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

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June 2009**

## **ABSTRACT**

The idea that community policing improves police performance and public image is relevant to contemporary law enforcement and its application to law enforcement because the public image of the police has major impacts on departments in the areas of funding, staffing, equipment, crime reduction, and policy and procedures. The purpose of this research is to determine if community policing improves police performance and public image. The image of police officers and their department is a topic of conversation from children in the street to politicians in Washington, D.C.

The method of inquiry used by the researcher included: social science publications, reviews of articles, internet sites, and a survey distributed to police officers and citizens of the community. Personal interviews of police officers and citizens were also conducted. The researcher discovered that community policing improves the status of police officers and their departments through improved communication with the communities they serve. Community policing creates a partnership between the police and the citizens.

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## INTRODUCTION

The problem many police supervisors face is that officers working for them are reluctant to change their style of policing by moving from the traditional model to the community policing model. Many police officers are resistant to change and are reluctant to embrace positive change (Kappeler & Gaines, 2005). Many openly resent the social work approach of community policing, dismissing community police officers as the grin and wave squad. Some police officers do not want to interact with the public; they only want to work when dispatched to an assignment or run traffic. They only want to arrest violators of the law and remove the undesirable element from the community. The implementation of community policing has been largely unsuccessful due to the resistance to change on the parts of police attitudes, culture, and organizational structures.

The issue to be examined considers whether or not community policing improves police performance and public image. The relevance of this topic is to provide information for police officers and departments that will encourage the use of community policing. Almost all police officers want better working conditions and more decision making ability regarding their jobs. Kappeler and Gaines (2005) stated, "It would seem that all line officers would benefit under a community policing approach, because of the greater responsibility, authority, and freedom to explore new ways to solve problems" (p. 305). The purpose of this research is to discover if community policing programs improve police performance and public image. It is a study of information regarding police and the citizens they serve. The research question to be examined focus on whether or not community policing improves police performance and public image. It will

look at citizen views of police performance and their experiences with the police as well as how police officers view of themselves and their public image.

The method of inquiry included: a review of articles, internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to citizens and police officers. Personal interviews will also be conducted to seek the opinions of citizens and police officers. The intended outcome or anticipated finding is expected to be that police officers and departments that have adopted the community policing philosophy have officers that have become stakeholders in the community and that citizens will have more respect for police officers.

The field of law enforcement will benefit from this research or be influenced by the conclusions on several different levels. It will result in police officers improving their work environment by empowering them with more decision making ability, by gaining community support, and by increasing levels of pay. It will result in police supervisors handling fewer complaints about officers, having time for administrative duties and checking on employees in the field, and having better information to make decisions. It will provide police management with a happier community customer base, motivated employees, less personal stress, and higher levels of job security. This study will show police officers that community policing will provide an improved public image and work performance.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

As has been mentioned before, the purpose of this research is to determine if community policing improves police performance and image. The literature review discusses how positive police interaction with the public improved the public's

perception of the police. It is these positive interactions that improve the communication between the two groups. As communication improves, it breaks down the formal barriers and creates a mutual understanding. The following helps to explain this process.

Palmiotto (2000) compared citizen and police interactions and examines how a positive relationship between police and citizens enhances the ability of the police to solve crimes through better communication. The improved communication between police and citizens helps the image of each group and their performance in solving community problems. The enhanced communication is the result of the breaking down of barriers between the two groups and the citizens becoming more comfortable with the police, thus improving their image in the community. Palmiotto (2000) also looked at how a negative feeling towards the police by citizens weakens interactive communication making the police officers job more difficult and distancing them from the community. He also discussed how poor communication between police and citizens can cause irrational behavior on the part of the police. Palmiotto (2000) recommended that the goals for police officers should be closer relations with underprivileged and minority neighborhoods, more effective and open communication between police and the citizens they serve, increased community involvement in preventing crime and solving social problems, and improved community relations and police awareness of community relations problems.

Langan, Greenfield, Smith, Durose, and Levin (2001) found that jurisdictions with fewer than 100,000 residents had a rate of contact with police that was 37% higher than those residing in jurisdictions of 1 million or more residents. People in smaller

communities build relationships easier with each other, thus improving communication between the police and citizens. The result is an improved image of the police officers in the community.

Skogan (2006) discussed how police officers are judged more by how they treat and talk to people when responding to calls than how they handled the call. He found that citizens were more concerned about police listening to their story and treating them with kindness and fairness than having their cases solved and property returned. The interaction of the police and the citizens is seen as more important than the occurrence of the crime. The effective communication of police enhanced their image and standing in the community making them more effective in their jobs.

Greene and Mastrofski (1991) examined how police officers employed with the Newark, New Jersey Police Department community policing program experienced lower rates of absenteeism. They found increased job satisfaction for officers working in community policing. This increased job satisfaction enhanced the communication between the police and citizens, creating a better working environment for the officers and a better living environment for the citizens. The end result was that community policing improved the image and performance of the police officers and improved the living environment for its citizens.

Schafer (2001) looked at the criticism of community policing by uninvolved officers and how officers working in community policing found it to be a rewarding experience. Officers also reported they enjoyed developing relationships with the community. Those that enjoyed their jobs did a better job and communicated more effectively. Officers that enjoyed their jobs did better and had enhanced levels of citizen

satisfaction, thus showing the benefits of community policing. The uninvolved officers were resistant to change and were not concerned with community problems.

Kappeler and Gaines (2005) discussed the reluctance of police to change, no matter how positive. This is stemmed from the fact that police organizations are conservative paramilitary organizations that view change with skepticism. Change in some instances will not only be viewed as betrayal, but as an insult as well. Regardless of an officer's assignment, any person who has defended the existing organizational structure risks becoming a loser since change implies a rejection of the culture and system they have worked hard to make succeed. The traditional model of police work attempts to make sense of the world and makes the officer's job easier by casting the police in the role of the tough cops who protect the forces of good from the forces of evil. Educated officers often find traditional policing very confining and community policing a stimulating opportunity to see how much they can achieve to make communities safer and better places to live. The community policing officer is better able to grasp the big picture, is more attuned to the community's needs, and, as a result, thrives in a system and culture that grants them more freedom and autonomy to explore proactive solutions to community problems. The increased responsibility and authority granted to community policing officers puts them in a better light with the citizens and enhances their position in the community.

Alpert and Piquero (2000) explained that community policing had a positive impact on individual police officers. Police officers expressed immense satisfaction in getting to know citizens more intimately and in seeing the results of their efforts within the community. They often spoke about community relationship building between



officers and citizens and how this developed trust between the two groups. The community policing officers also enjoyed the freedom and independence they were given to be creative in dealing with problems. The police officers appreciated the trust the programs placed in them. Alpert and Piquero (2000) also investigated the effects of community policing on officers job satisfaction. It found that officers who had volunteered as members of special units thrived on their new duties and responsibilities. It also found that the impact of community policing on citizens' attitudes toward police produced positive effects.

Trojanowicz and Pollard (1986) examined the data gathered from a 33 question survey that asked police officers about foot patrol in Flint, Michigan. It found that 81% replied that foot patrol officers received more information from community citizens because they knew the residents. Almost half of the police officers, 49%, said citizens would say that foot patrol's major advantage was it created familiarity with the officer and increased communication with the officer. Almost all officers (96%) said the residents felt better about their department as a result of foot patrols. By getting out of their vehicles, the police officers were able to improve their performance and image in the community.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research question to be examined considers whether or not community policing improves police performance and public image. The researcher hypothesizes that improved communication between police and citizens improves police performance and public image. The method of inquiry will include: internet sites, periodicals, and a survey distributed to 77 survey participants. It will also include a personal interview with

the chief of police of a major medical university in which open-ended questions will be asked regarding community policing. The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject of community policing improving police performance and public image will include a survey of 37 police officers and 40 citizens. The size of the survey will consist of 25 questions, distributed to 77 survey participants.

The surveys will be distributed to police officers working for the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Police Department (27 surveys) and to police officers across the United States (ten surveys) via the internet. The surveys will be distributed to citizens working for the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (38 surveys) and to citizens across the United States (two surveys) via the internet. The survey will be distributed between April 1, 2008 and June 30, 2008. The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in 40 surveys returned by citizens and 37 surveys returned by police officers. The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by the researcher to compare the answers from each group to see if opinions are similar or opposing.

## **FINDINGS**

The researcher conducted two surveys. The first survey was to persons working for a police department. The second was to citizens that did not work for a police department. Each group was given the same 25-question survey.

A total of 77 surveys were completed and returned to the researcher. The citizens returned 40 surveys, and the police returned 37 surveys. This paper examines the findings of these two surveys and how they compared against each other. The first six questions of the survey asked demographic questions regarding the person's age,

sex, race, educational level, annual income, and if they work for a police department. Both the majority of police (41%) and citizens (38%) were in the 41 to 50 age group. The majority of police (92%) were male, and the majority of the citizens (67%) were female. The race of the majority of police (92%) and citizens (60%) was white. The majority of both police (35%) and citizens (31%) had 16 years of education. The majority of police (46%) had an income range between 50,001 and 75,000 annually, and the majority of citizens (60%) had an income range of 25,001 to 50,000 annually.

Question seven asked if police departments should advertise their services, and both a majority of police (86%) and citizens (83%) thought police departments should advertise their services. Question eight asked if police departments should focus on solving community problems or arresting violators of the law. Seventy-three percent of the police thought they should be focusing on community problems, while 51% of the citizens thought the police should focus on arresting violators of the law.

Questions nine through 22 of the survey asked the questionnaire recipients if community policing or traditional policing was more effective. Question nine asked if a community policing department or a traditional police department has the best public image. Both the police (95%) and the citizens (80%) answered that community policing departments have the best public image. Question 10 asked which type of police department should have more staffing. Both the police (76%) and citizens (55%) said community policing departments should have more staffing. Question 11 asked which types of police departments should be paid more money. Both the police (79%) and the citizens (58%) said community policing departments should be paid more money.

Question 12 asked which types of police departments have more influence. Both the police (89%) and citizens (51%) said community policing departments have more influence. Question 13 asked which types of departments provided safer communities. Both a majority of police (80%) and citizens (74%) said community policing departments provide safer communities. Question 14 asked with which type of department is the community happier when it comes to providing services. Both the majority of police (86%) and the citizens (78%) said the community is happier with community policing departments. Question 15 asked which types of police departments have a better working environment for officers. Both the police (81%) and the citizens (80%) said community policing departments have better working environments.

Question 16 asked which types of departments have officers that are stakeholders in their communities. Both the police (96%) and the citizens (82%) said community policing departments have officers that are stakeholders in the community. Question 17 asked which types of police departments have increased community support. Both the police (97%) and the citizens (87%) said community policing departments have increased community support. Question 18 asked which type of department gives its officers more decision making ability. Both the police (80%) and the citizens (59%) said community policing departments give officers more decision making ability.

Question 19 asked which type of department provides more job security to its officers. Both the police (79%) and the citizens (76%) said community policing departments provides more job security. Question 20 asked which types of departments are less stressful for officers when it comes to working conditions. Both police (77%)

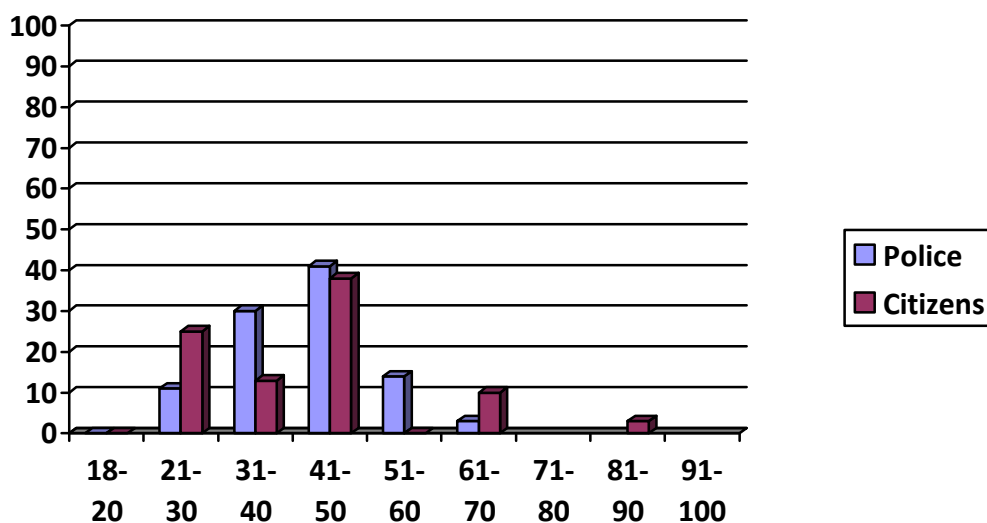
and the citizens (82%) said community policing departments are less stressful.

Question 21 asked which types of departments have happier police officers. Both police (74%) and citizens (79%) said community policing departments have happier officers.

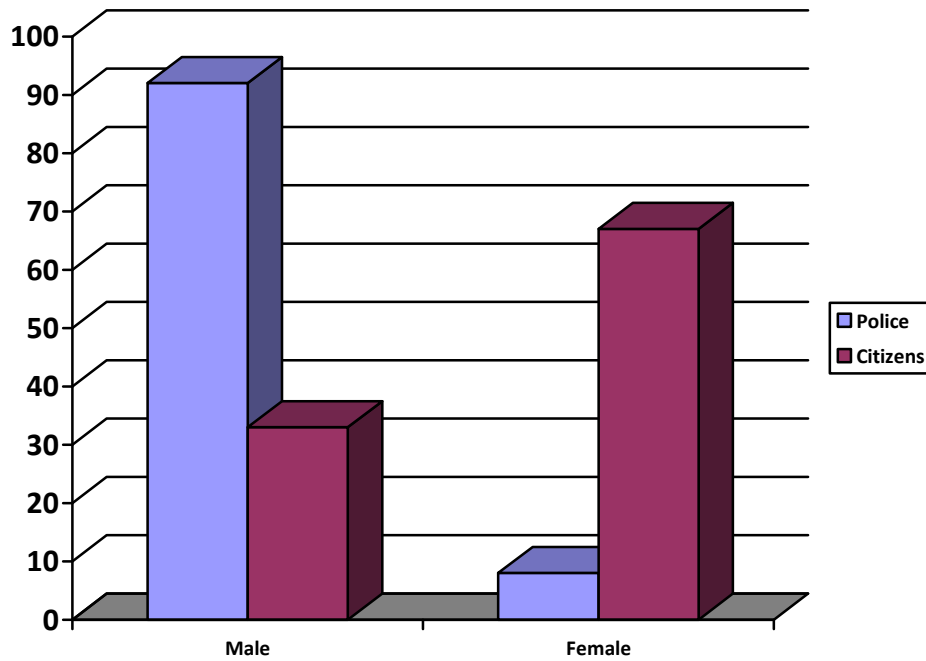
Question 22 asked which police officer has a better public image, an officer walking a beat or an officer driving a vehicle, both the police (91%) and the citizens (80%) agreed that an officer walking a beat had the best public image. Question 23 asked if police officers should be required to walk their communities and make positive interactive contacts with citizens. Both the police (77%) and the citizens (88%) said the police should be required to walk a beat and make citizen contacts. Question 24 asked if police officers should check doors of residences and businesses to make sure they are secure when no one is around. Both the police (60%) and the citizens (66%) thought they should be checking doors. Question 25 asked if police officers should have customer service training. Both the police (86%) and the citizens (98%) thought the police should have customer service training.

On July 10, 2008, this researcher met with the chief of police of a major university police department and interviewed him regarding community policy and how it affects the image and performance of police officers. He was asked if community policing created more or less work for him as an administrator. The chief explained that community policing needs to be a philosophy and a core value for a police department. He said a police department needs to be run like a business, and the customers expect good service. He went onto explain that an administrator would have to give up control of daily operations as a department changes from a traditional military style to a community policing style department. He said that as more decisions are made by line

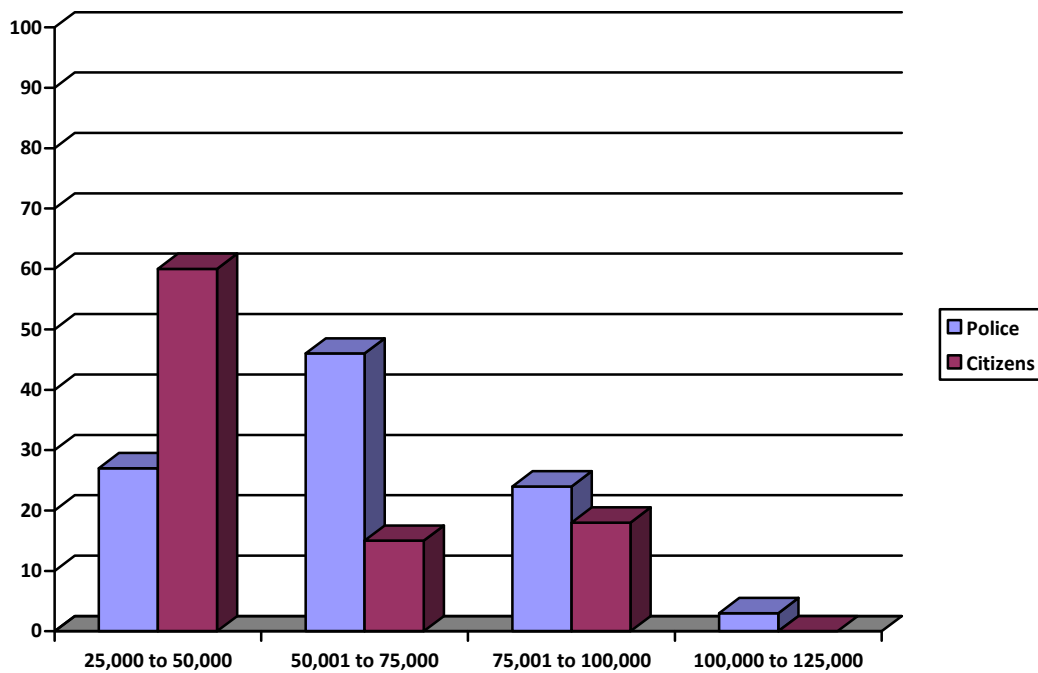
officers, supervisors have to be able to handle “the oops” when they happen. This may mean having to explain the rationale to his bosses for a decision made by an officer that now does not look good. He said officers need to have the freedom to make mistakes without the fear of being written up for decisions made in good faith. The chief said if community policing is done right it allows the police to do more work. It creates effective relationships with the community. If there is a problem, the community is more apt to look at the situation objectively instead of automatically seeing the police as doing something wrong. It also creates an environment where the community is willing to help and be good witnesses when needed. The chief said if an administrator can say yes to his officer’s when they seek approval for positive change, it will increase their performance in the field.



**Figure 1.** Age of survey participants comparing police and citizens



**Figure 2.** Sex of survey participants comparing police and citizens.



**Figure 3.** Income of survey participants comparing police and citizens.

## **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS**

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not community policing improves police performance and public image. The researcher looked at both the opinions of police officers and citizens. The purpose of this research was to help convince police officers practicing traditional policing that they need to change to community policing because it improves their performance and public image. It also tries to convince citizens that it benefits them with more professional and enhanced police services.

The police and citizens working together can find solutions to the root problems that are the impetus for people causing crimes. The research question that was examined focused on the opinions of police officers and citizens to determine if community policing or traditional policing was the best method of providing law enforcement services to the community. The questions examined issues of police performance, police public image, staffing, salaries, police influence, safety, job satisfaction, working conditions, community support, police decision making ability, job security, foot patrol verses vehicle patrol, work related stress, and if police officers should received customer service training. The researcher hypothesized that community policing improves police performance and public image. The researcher concluded from the findings that community policing improves police performance and public image. The findings of the research did support the hypothesis. The reason why the findings did support the hypothesis is probably due the improved communication between police and citizens when police use community policing as their operating method. There is also more trust between police and citizens using community policing. Community



policing eliminates the barriers between the police and citizens through increased communication and enhanced professional service.

Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because the pool of persons surveyed was not a large number, and there is little information on the topic of police image and community policing. The study of community policing improving police performance and public image is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because society is changing on a daily basis. Police officers and departments need to be able to adapt to these changes or they will be useless to the communities they serve. No longer does the public blindly accept what police officers tell them. Police officers need to be able to explain facts to the citizens and proactively seek to solve problems that community's face. This is much easier when police and citizens already know each other. Police officers, supervisors, administrators, and citizens stand to benefit from the results of this research on community policing and its affects on the performance and image of police officers. Community policing creates a business environment that improves communication between all the parties involved and puts police officers in a positive light. It is a win-win situation for both the police and the citizens they serve.

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## APPENDIX

### Survey Regarding Police Performance and Public Image

This is a survey being conducted by Sgt. John Mulloy of the University of Texas System Police. Sgt. Mulloy works at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Police Department. These questions are for research purposes only and do not regard any specific police department.

Thank you for taking a few moments to fill out this survey. It will provide data for my paper being written as part of the educational requirement to complete course work for the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT). If you have any questions please call me at 972-268-4827 or email: [john.mulloy@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:john.mulloy@utsouthwestern.edu). *PLEASE DO NOT GIVE YOUR NAME.*

#### Definitions:

*Traditional Policing- is a policing strategy in which police officers are dispatched to calls for service, document crimes and try to solve them.*

*Community Policing- is a policing strategy based on the notion that community interaction and support can help control crime, with community members helping to identify suspects, and bring problems to the attention of police.*

1. What is your age? 18-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81-90, 91-100
2. What is your sex? *Male, Female*
3. What is your race? *White, Black, Asian, South Pacific Origin, Native American, Other*
4. Do you work for a police department? *Yes, No.*
5. What is your level of education in years? *10, 11, 12 or GED, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,*
6. What is the range of your annual income? *0- 25,000, 25,001- 50,000, 50,001- 75,000, 75,001- 100,000, 100,001- 125,000, 125,001 +*
7. Do think police departments should advertise their services? *Yes, No.*
8. Do you think police departments should focus on *solving community problems* or *arresting violators of the law*? Circle your answer.
9. Which type of police departments have the best public image? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*
10. Which type of police departments should have more staffing? *Traditional police departments*

*or community policing departments.*

11. Which type of police departments should pay employees more money? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

12. Which type of police departments have more influence? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

13. Which type of department provide safer communities for residents? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

14. Which types of departments is the community happier with when it comes to providing services? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

15. Which type of police departments have a better working environment for officers? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

16. Which type of department have officers that are stakeholders in their communities? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

17. Which type of department have increased community support? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

18. Which type of department gives it's officers more decision making ability? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

19. Which type of department provides more job security to it's officers? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

20. Which types of departments are less stressful for officers when it comes to working conditions? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

21. Which types of departments have happier police officers? *Traditional police departments or community policing departments.*

22. Which police officer has a better public image? *Officer walking a beat or an officer driving a police car.*

23. Should police officers be required to walk their communities and make positive interactive contacts with citizens? *Yes or No.*

24. Do you think police officers should check the doors of residences and business to make sure they are secure when no one is around? *Yes or No.*

25. Do you think police officers should have customer service training? *Yes or No.*